The Idea of History in Russia and Walter Scott’s Historical Narratives

Tatiana V. Artemyeva and Mikhail I. Mikeshin

History in Russia in the Enlightenment was represented not only by academic research, but by the series of literary works. They created a space of public history and satisfies the need for historical knowledge for those who could not or did not want to study serious scholarly works. They searched for cultural clichés, patterns, and metaphors to mold their historical images, schemes, and explanations. Walter Scott’s novels made an immediate impact on Russian society because it had been already prepared for such literature. In Scott’s historical novel there was a beneficial synthesis of simplicity and professionalism, out-of-body-ness of historical patterns and obviousness of moral lessons. The form was one in which history could bring about its true predestination, that is, to form the soul and the heart. Scott’s representation of the ordinary man in the background of large-scale historical events had no influence upon Russian historiography that continued to describe only events of a grand ‘state scale’, but survived in literature, which, for three centuries, developed both the philosophy of history and philosophical anthropology. Scott became for Russia one of those authors who summed up the quest of the Enlightenment and brought a special type of art history discourse into the world. Russian historians continue to point to the enduring quality of interpreting history through fiction. This results in political and moral values dominating historical discourse.

Walter Scott’s novels are well known in Russia. His reputation has its history: however, the vast bibliography about it deals mostly with his literary influence, the theoretical implications of which are only roughly outlined.

There are some explanatory models for cultural influence, the most obvious of which is ‘the theory of cultural distribution’. It maintains that cultural spaces that have come into contact with each other should become in some sense homogeneous communicating vessels. Thus a phenomenon emerging in one culture immediately penetrates into another and puts down roots in it, and the adoption of a cultural innovation is considered in terms of the impact of the active culture upon the passive one.
model is irrelevant to spheres of literature, arts and philosophy, because it cannot answer questions of specificity. It cannot explain whether the source of Walter Scott’s popularity in Russia was an interest in British or Scottish culture (it logically follows from the contents of his novels), or was an outcome of the particular interest in French culture and its fashionable currents given that the first acquaintance with Scott and the first translations of his works were connected with the French language. “It took the resounding success of Walter Scott’s novels in France, where every new novel by ‘the author of Waverley’ was quickly translated into French and greeted with boundless enthusiasm, to make Russian society turn to his novels. It was only in the mid-1820s that Walter Scott’s novels began to be published as individual volumes in Russian. All these translations were made from Defauconpret’s French versions, and it was precisely this French Scott (either in French or translated from French) who for many years became a favourite author of Russian readers”.¹ By the end of this decade all his novels had been translated into Russian and republished several times.² Did this popularity limit itself to the genre peculiarities of Scott’s novels or were his ideas of interest?

Scott’s novels made an immediate impact on Russian society, and continued to do so, with his collected works being published well into Soviet and post-Soviet times. This interest was not, of course, evoked by an attention to Scottish history proper or to Scotland. The interest in British culture and particularly the identification of Scottish culture as ‘special’, different from English, were specific to a small group within the intellectual elite. And while Scottish historical and philosophical thought was appealing to some Russian thinkers, it permeated into the country in minute portions and often was not distinguished from ideas from England. The form of the novel was in any case attractive to the Russian reader, though it was a relatively new way to express historical consciousness. Thinkers of that time experimented quite a lot with the forms and genres of historical narratives. It is possible to say that the entire 18th century was searching for such a form, because historical consciousness had become an important constituent of ideology and probably the only kind of social epistemology, except for utopia. Learned (or pseudo-learned) and theatrical dramatic narratives prevailed before Scott. The novel was considered too ‘low’ a genre, inadequate for depicting Russia’s glorious past. Besides, the question of the relationship between the form, the style of narrative and historical authenticity was not quite settled. Nikolai M. Karamzin (1766–1826) believed that the level of artistic merit depended

¹ Altshuller 2006, 207
² Levin 1975, 6. A list of Russian translations of W. Scott’s literary works published in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century is attached as the Addendum. The dynamics of publications is worth mentioning; their number reaches its first maximum between 1821 and 1836 (the first publications), the next revival is between 1844 and 1858 (mostly reprints), and the last growth from 1864 on is defined mainly by special editions for youngsters.
upon the historical distance involved. He wrote about ‘three sorts of history’: *contemporary* to an author, *distant* from him, but with witnesses still alive, and *ancient*, founded exclusively on studies of documents. The eminent Russian historian formulated a curious paradox: the level of narrative subjectivity could rise as one came closer to modernity, but not vice versa. The ban against artful imagination could deprive the historical narrative of bright colors and fascination. Karamzin himself complained that “instead of *alive, whole* images he presented only *shadows*”, (Karamzin 2003, 34) all these should be sacrificed for the sake of *authenticity*.

It was not by chance that this problem was raised by Karamzin, himself a historian and eminent writer, who felt a certain unity and contradiction between the historical narrative and artistic story. The writer, well known for his gift of penetrating into the souls of his characters understood, how great a temptation it was to conjecture a historical image. Karamzin never ascribed to the characters of his *Istoriya gosudarstva rossiiskogo* (A History of the Russian State) any actions against their nature. He nevertheless believed that historical collisions “greatly affect the imagination and heart” and tried to depict his characters’ emotional world in order not to spoil authenticity, but on the contrary, to actualize historical events. His characters ‘with horror’, ‘with a heavy sigh’ or ‘in joy and delight of the heart’.

Ivan P. Elagin (1725–1793) remarked: “We see many writers who shine with learned beauties, but their constrained learned style is a torment for the reader and a disgrace for the learned.”

Mikhail M. Shcherbatov’s (1733–1790) *Istoriya rossiiskaya ot drevneishikh vremen* (A Russian History from Ancient Times) became one of the most important sources for Karamzin, but was never used by Russian writers who worked in the genre of the historical novel. Shcherbatov bases his account exclusively upon political expediency, and denounces or does not recognize as necessary other motifs of conduct, psychological affects, and the ‘fateful’ concourse of circumstances.

Karamzin unintentionally attaches importance to the language and style of his narrative. He was a much more talented writer than Shcherbatov, and this put his historical work in the forefront, made it equal with a work of art and an attractive source for those writers who turned towards Russian history.

Karamzin uses his artistic skill and scholarly intuition to describe the internal world of the participants of historical events. His history is a ‘sentimental journey’ into the past that increases the glory of ‘the Russian traveler’:

3 Karamzin 2003, 33–35.
4 Elagin 1803, XII.
I know that the battles of our appanage civil war that thunder incessantly in the space of five centuries are unimportant for the reason; that this subject is rich nor by thoughts for a pragmatist, nor by beauties for a painter; but history is not a novel, and the world is not a garden where everything should be pleasing; history depicts the real world. We see on the Earth majestic mountains and waterfalls, blossoming meadows and valleys; but how many barren sands and sad steppes! Travelling, however, is generally dear to a human being with vivid feelings and imagination; even in deserts there are charming views.\footnote{Karamzin 2003, 33.}

Karamzin’s History contrasts with Gustav G. Shpet’s opinion according to which social sciences and history do not study ‘souls’ and, therefore, ‘phenomena of the soul’.\footnote{Shpet 1916.} In any event, history became a handbook for Russian writers who turned to events of the past.

During the Enlightenment some fundamental changes in the understanding of history occurred. It turned out that it was not just a calculation and the establishment of particular facts, but a product of the creative process that required comprehension. The historian ceased to be a simple scribe: his/her role in understanding and interpreting past events dramatically changed. The historically limited, biased, mythological, annalistic medieval narrative gave place to historical writing proper. Chronicles were not treated any more as ‘reliable sources’, but turned into objects of comparative analysis and professional research. The German historians Gerhard Friedrich Mueller (1705–1783), Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738) and August Ludwig Schloezer (1735–1809), who worked at St Petersburg’s Academy of Sciences, promoted this new approach. The methodology of these German thinkers was matched with an ‘encyclopedic’ attitude to learning and was the result of a ‘monological’ method elaborated in the depths of speculative metaphysics and applied successively and with excellent outcomes in all spheres of knowledge. The new, ‘scientific’ worldview of the Enlightenment presupposed a preliminary ‘establishing of order’ amidst an ocean of isolated facts, and it was this that was achieved by these German historians who practiced history almost as a natural science.

Russian historians considered history to be mostly a phenomenon of ideology or even politics. At that time bulky histories were created by Vasilii N. Tatishchev (1686–1750), Mikhail V. Lomonosov (1711–1765) as well as by Mikhail M. Shcherbatov and Nikolai M. Karamzin. They combined scholarly research with ideological aims. At that time a set of basic presuppositions was also formulated. We would call them ‘historiosophical archetypes’. Their adherents assumed that any description and
understanding of events that had taken place in Russia should be brought into correlation with
the history of Western Europe, that the history of Russia was first of all ‘the history of the state’,
not ‘of the people’, that this history had a certain starting point and charismatic leaders with
whom the country began a new counting of time. A serious change of the political regime and
associated changes of society and of the state often arranged such a ‘beginning’. When passing
this ‘reference point’, Russia lost (broke) its links with the past and began to build all its state
institutions ‘from the very beginning’. Russia became ‘different’, ‘young’, ‘new’ and opened itself
up to fresh doctrines and trends. Only a few Russian historians, such as Mikhail Lomonosov, did
not stick to such a fixed reference point.

Historians in the Age of Enlightenment tended to disclose ‘points of historical bifurcation’
and main historical heroes, that is, to list the personages of the play under the title of ‘Russian
History’. They believed that these events and heroes should be the subjects of the various arts,
and later on painters and writers did indeed use them. For instance, Mikhail Lomonosov wrote
special programs for historical pictures titled Idei dlya zhivopisnykh kartin iz Rossiiiskoii istorii
(Ideas for Figurative Pictures from Russian History). Historians of later times also compared
collisions of the historical process to the plots of works of art. Mikhail P. Pogodin (1800–1875)
assumed that the whole of Russian history consisted of “novels that could have never been created
by Walter Scott's magnificent imagination”.7

Turning to the central figures of Russian history who became popular characters in various
works of art, we see first of all rulers who participated in the most important twists of Russia's
destiny. Vladimir, who baptized the country, Ryurik, who made a state out of it, Peter, who turned
to European culture, Catherine, who augmented his achievements, are all on the list.

The majority of memoirs, historical works and historical fiction were dedicated to tsar Peter
the First. These examples demonstrated how the evidence of elder contemporaries, ready to
mythologize the adorable hero, was replaced by the fantasies of those who could not remember
what had happened ‘sixty years ago’. ‘Peter’s Time’ was reflected in institutionalized forms of
highly specialized treatises on history and also in metaphorical and allegorical texts of art. Under
the mythological pseudonyms of Perseus, Hercules, Jason, the apostle Peter, even ‘Peter the
Great’, Peter I became a hero of historical paintings, odes, allegorical compositions and decorative
monuments. Popular mythology, as well as state ideology, needed vivid artistic images rather than

7 Pogodin 1846, 12.
authenticity. All these works of art formed the ambivalent image of Peter I in which the historical, the mythological and the fictitious were tightly interwoven. Thus it was possible later on to use the image widely as a hero of literary works and in the course of time almost to substitute the historical person for a fictitious character.

To compare the present with the past, to find historical examples and analogies, models became the norm for intellectual and ruling elites. Catherine the Great (1729–1796) was the author of *Zapiski, kasatel'no Rossiiskoi istorii* (Notes Concerning Russian History). She writes:

> Let an impartial reader take the trouble to compare the epoch of Russian history with the stories of contemporaries of Russian grand dukes of every age to see clearly the pattern of every age’s mind and that humankind everywhere and through the universe has had the same passions, wishes, intentions and has often used the same ways to success.\(^8\)

While composing her bulky opus, Catherine, of course, called for the help of ‘advisers’, but the conceptual scheme was all hers. The main idea of the Notes, designed initially for her grandsons’ education, was to demonstrate the place and role of autocracy in the history of Russia. Catherine ‘threw’ the then popular conception of ‘enlightened monarchy’ down unto the past and treated every monarchy as ‘enlightened’ or as orientated to ‘enlightenment’. The empress was also the author of some dramas about the establishment of the Russian state, such as *Nachalnoe upravlenie Olega, Podrazhanie Shakespiru* (The Initial Ruling of Oleg, An Imitation of Shakespeare).

‘History as science’ was by no means the only form to express historical consciousness. A.L. Schloezer marked out four types of historians: the historian-collector (*Geschichtssammler*), historian-researcher (*Geschichtsforscher*), historian-compiler (*Geschichtsschreiber*) and historian-artist (*Geschichtsmaler*).\(^9\) All these types were present in the Russian Enlightenment. However, in the last type one more subdivision could be singled out. Authors from this group might be called ‘fabricators of history’. Their hypothetical constructions could be supported by intuition or ‘pure reasoning’. They compensated for the lack of information by using historical analogies or just by their imagination, but they satisfied the need for historical knowledge for those who could not or did not want to study serious scholarly works and created a space of public history.

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8 Ekaterina 1901, 5.
9 Rubinshtein 1941, 159.
F.A. Emin (about 1735–1770) was one of the brightest ‘history writers’ and the author of ‘political novels’. From 1767 till 1769 Emin published three volumes under the title Rossiiskaya istoriya... (A Russian History...).  

In full: Rossiiskaya istoriya zhizni vsekh drevnih ot samogo nachala gosudarei vse velikiya i vechnoi dostoinyya pamyati IMPERATORA PETRA VELIKAGO deistviya, ego naslednits i naslednikov emu posledovanie i opisanie v Severe ZLATAGO VEKA vo vremya tsarstvovaniya EKATERINY VELIKOI v sebe zaklyuchayushchaya (A Russian History of the Lives of All Ancient Sovereigns from the Very Beginning, All Great and Worthy of the Eternal Memory Emperor Peter the Great’s Deeds, His Heiresses and Successors Who Followed Him That Includes a Description of the Golden Age in the North during the Reign of Catherine the Great).

Reasoning about the aims and tasks of any history Emin remarked that it could not be just a list of facts or a description of political events. The main task of historical writing as well as a work of art is ‘a direct instruction regarding what one must follow and what one must avoid’. ‘The historical philosopher’ can use both a professional and an artistic discourse. Emin confesses that he put into lips of his historical subjects words they could have said instead of those they did say. He saturated his history with monologues and so made it theatrical, like a play.

The temptation to force people of another epoch to speak in a modern language was caused by the desire to make their internal world understandable. N. Karamzin in his ‘pre-walter-scottian’ story Natal’ya, boyarskaya doch’, (Natal’ya, a Boyar’s Daughter 1792) remarked that ‘old-fashioned lovers’ spoke in a quite different way, but he used modern speech to make them comprehensible. “The most beautiful made-up style of speaking disfigures history dedicated not to the writer’s fame, not to the readers’ delight and not even to moralizing wisdom, but only to the truth, which makes itself the source of delight and goodness”, he wrote.

V.A. Zhukovsky saw a harmonious synthesis of the literary style and the national character in Scott’s novels. Enchanted by the poetic qualities of Scott’s historical discourse, Zhukovsky intended to recast Ivanhoe into a rhymed poem. In his note of 1816 under the title Kak obrazovat’ original’nyi kharakter russkoi poezii (How to Form the Original Character of Russian Poetry) he writes: “The originality of our poetry is in history. It is necessary in it to guess the spirit of every epoch and to express the spirit in modern language not taken from any of the neighbors by form and to take much from annals. Karamzin’s history is a great improvement of prose. The same way should be taken by poetry”.

Scott’s works had of course been written in English (that is why he is persistently called ‘an English writer’ in Russia), but the Russian poet, who mused upon the historical poetics of the Russian language, read Scott in French. One should not see here a paradox, rather one should
turn to that deep level common to all mankind that allows one to overcome the variety of words of natural languages. Zhukovsky remarks:

In Walter Scott’s historical novel there is more truth than in history; the same can be said about Shakespeare’s historical dramas. These two giants offer their hands to each other. What if a Shakespeare turned up for Russian history and through his genius in a worthy manner revived and embodied all that is held back by our scant chronicles! What a lively picture would open before our eyes. Ancient Russian history is too alien to us, and it is difficult to guess and vividly imagine this ancient division: poetic fiction will be too visible. ... But one should be a great creator to erect a well-proportioned building from the crushed stone of chronicles.\(^1\)

The movement from Shakespeare to Scott follows the logic of the development of Russian historical literature and meets the all-European tradition of collating these names. Reflection over these two great British writers who found their inspiration in history was a characteristic feature not only of high literature but also of historical discourse. Such associations and comparisons with popular European authors are typical of the system of intellectual self-identification of Russian thinkers. N.A. Dobrolyubov wrote about the habit of enrolling talented authors in ‘Russian Pindars, Molières and Voltaires’.\(^2\) He saw that this habit was widely spread, though quite futile. “To fabricate a leaflet about Homer’s epic aroused improved in Dead Souls, to proclaim Lermontov to be Byron, to esteem Ostrovsky higher than Shakespeare, all this is not new in Russian literature. Even more than that: now, probably, nobody remembers who in this country used to write historical novels better than Walter Scott.”\(^3\) These words are mainly about the artistic level, but a permanent return to the same names while talking about national identity has not happened by chance. The desire to understand one’s own history, to find whether it has direction and meaning, why a glorious past does not lead to a bright future, and even if it does, then why the present is so mean, make one search for a solution in the past.

The movement from Shakespeare to Scott marks the historical change of genres. The classicism (violated by Shakespeare of course) of dramatic historiosophy turned into the romantic desire to conceive the emotional state of human beings, to see history as an activity of passions, to understand them as the real causes of actions. This desire well suited the genre of the novel

\(^1\) Zhukovsky 2004, 297.  
\(^2\) Dobrolyubov 1963, 190.  
\(^3\) Dobrolyubov 1962, 168.
with its plot lines and digressions. How should history be told, in a ‘scientific’ or a literary way? Is it possible that artistic harmony, which leans towards aesthetic unity, could help to fill the marginal spaces that inevitably emerge in the variegated fabric of historical discourse? The writer can see in the intermittent flow of ordinary events some main ones that change the image of an epoch. As history is created by people, so the writer is the best person to grasp the logic of human relations. According to Ivan Elagin (1725–1793), the author of Opyt povestovovaniya o Rossii (An Attempt at a Narration about Russia), any description of historical figures can also bear marks of personal appreciations and passions: often a writer endows historical individuals with his own views ‘especially when he wants to cover a lack of direct information by his speculations’.¹⁸

Thinkers of the Enlightenment saw in the discourses of literature a method of seeing beyond the inadequate empirical record. They used this method as far as possible until the intensifying specialization of knowledge pulled history, literature and philosophy apart. In this sense D.M. Urnov’s assertion that Scott’s impact made historians ‘estheticize’ their works seems incorrect. He writes: ‘Even historical scholarship was influenced by ‘the Scottish bard’. Historical works, in the likeness of Walter-Scottian novels, were made, as was said at that time, picturesque. Following the novelist, historians were trying to describe past events with the lively plenitude that we see in a good literature type or character. This plenitude, a kind of three-dimensionality and self-sufficiency of character, is the very sign of artistry’ (Urnov). Rather it was vice versa, it was precisely the artistic representation of history, specific to Russian historiography of the Enlightenment, which resulted in the enthusiasm for Walter Scott and in the organic reception of his prose. It seemed that in Scott’s historical novel there was a beneficial synthesis of simplicity and professionalism, out-of-body-ness of historical patterns and obviousness of moral lessons. The form was one in which history could bring about its true predestination, that is, to form the soul and the heart, because ‘no other science like this can educate us in the science of the human heart, in the science that is the most essential and most captivating’.¹⁹

Thus we can state that, even before Scott, Russian intellectuals searched for ways to find convincing and ‘useful’ accounts of history, so Scott’s seeds fell on fertile ground. The educated public in Russia was ready to accept Scott’s artistic achievements and actively developed and sought out narrative forms adequate to its mentality in Europe. There was no ‘ferroconcrete’

¹⁸ Elagin 1803, 250.
¹⁹ Yanovsky 1803, 855.
official type of historical narrative. The public was educated and developed enough not to allow this kind of over-simplifying. Catherine, Shcherbatov and Karamzin were searching for adequate narrative and ideological forms of history. And in this sense Scott arrived at just the right time.

Scott became fashionable in Russia first of all because he had become fashionable in Europe and especially in France. At the beginning of the 19th century the Russian educated public was not at all numerous and formed part of an all-European cultural space, since the public for the most part read French and German to get acquainted with European novelties, rather than waiting for translations. The nobility, the highest and most educated social group, was the first to absorb Scott’s novels in Russia. Scott’s novels, already translated into Russian, very quickly penetrated into lower social strata, but it is evident that the attitude to the writer was formed mostly within the nobility. Dolinin remarks that a special role in this was played by the ladies of high society (Dolinin 1988, 130). It is possible that they saw Scott as a ‘bard of nobles’: “The Scots aristocracy, those fading flowers of the forest, became bearers of nationhood, their role in fact and legend reinforced by the literary wizardry of Sir Walter Scott.”

Scott ‘restored’ an appearance of olden times on the basis of modern emotions and ideas. He was fashionable due to these emotions and ideas. Scott could be fashionable also because of his references to documents and witnesses that looked very ‘scholarly’. Russia failed to observe Scott’s connection with the Scottish eighteenth-century philosophy and historiography in which he was educated. It is worth remarking, though, that even in the West this connection was directly mentioned only in the twentieth century (Forbes 1953; Brown 1979). Nevertheless, in Russia ‘key words’ from Adam Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments were used from the very beginning to describe Scott’s style: ‘Walter Scott remained the only one of his kind; and this solitude is due to his impartiality ... Who of his imitators have this firmness, this impartiality, this all-embracing sympathy?’ (Syn Otechestva 1834, 546–547. Our italics.— T.A., M.M.). A modern Russian researcher of Scott’s works speaks with the same words, while observing ‘the illusion of absolute impartiality that amazed contemporaries and close descendants’:

many contemporaries were struck by his [Scott’s] image of the Author of Waverley, an unruffled dispassionate restorer and registrar of historical events who so skillfully conceals his opinions and

feelings that his presence in the novel becomes imperceptible, indiscernible ... he seems as if he is not implicated in anything ... this ‘calm equanimity’, accented impassivity of the ‘disappearing’ author were recognized to be the basic properties of the Walter-Scottian discourse ... a painter without fear and prejudices ... comments like these could be found on the pages of almost every European magazine (Dolinin 1988, 181–183, 190).

G. Lukacs identifies Scott’s new kind of central character for a historical romance. It was the choice of not a passionate and committed hero, but of a middling sort of mediocre, prosaic ‘hero’ as the central figure that fluctuated between the clashing extremes of a society in crisis (Lukacs 1962, 34; Gareth Jones 2004, 191).

Scott uses in his novels various impartial spectators, as Adam Smith would call them. He makes the following ‘experiment’. The author ‘drives’ into a certain historical milieu a ‘biorobot’, that is an ‘imbedded observer’. The biorobot’s characteristics are such that they allow him to go through all the events and hostile episodes and to describe the incidents and situations he gets in. He exchanges information with the Author in his internal language (which of course derives from the Author’s language and notions). He transmits his impressions in this language thus interpreting them ‘in the modern way’. The Author himself, playing, of course, the role of ‘God’, scrutinizes the historical milieu and interprets it in his, that is, in a modern language. The Author portrays (actually, creates) historical settings from studied documents and the ‘cultural heroes’ of that time.

It is well-known that David Hume many times declared that, writing his history of England, he saw that his main task was to overcome party prejudices and biases. He talked about independence, not objectivity: “I thought that I was the only historian that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices” (Hume 1778, xxx). History, according to Hume, is a special experience of two spectators, a historian and his reader, and the ideal spectator is at the same time impartial and sympathetic, rational and sentimental (Hilson 1978, 209). The first virtue of any historian is to be truthful and impartial.

Hume does not identify the constancy of human nature with the invariability of historical events: his constancy is not substantial, but methodological. An essential contribution to history is made precisely when the historian discovers the consequences of irregular changes that impact
upon human history. The historian explains when he shows that the irregular is regular. No people, Hume admits, for example, in his *History*, has endured such an abrupt and total change in its manners as the English nation in the seventeenth century. Moreover, the analysis of characters, principles and motives of the acts of historical figures of that time shows that the novelty in history originates from individual human activities. The constancy of human nature for Hume is a methodological principle that makes history possible, it makes the consistency and credibility of what the historian is saying possible. It is impossible to understand the past without sympathy and constancy.

On the basis of these two principles, Hume thinks it is possible to add his imagination to construct a historical narrative, to interpret the links between and motives of events, to put into the heads of historical figures thoughts and intentions, providing they are not in conflict with ‘physical and moral necessity’. Besides, in these products of the imagination there is a pragmatic element: they make the story interesting and tie together isolated facts. Sympathy and conjecture are, for Hume, the only ways to comprehend historical data. General, common experience gives the standard, or criterion. The Humean slogan ‘turn to common experience’ directs the historian to apply his or her imagination to the collected data.

The most eminent Russian pre-revolutionary historian V. Klyuchevsky (1841–1911) gives a description of N. Karamzin’s style that closely resembles distinctive features of Scott’s style:

Karamzin looks at historical phenomena like a spectator looks at a theatrical scene. He follows the speeches and deeds of the play’s personages, the development of dramatic intrigue, its entanglement and denouement. For him every character poses, every fact tends to play a dramatic scene. ... Karamzin’s heroes act in an empty space, with no decorations, no historical ground under their feet, no popular surroundings around them. They are rather aerial shadows, than living historical persons. ... They are people of various chronological periods, but of the same historical age. They speak and do what the author makes them speak and do ... Karamzin’s characters are surrounded by a specific moral atmosphere: it consists of abstract notions of duty, honor, good, evil, passion, vice, virtue. The speeches and deeds of Karamzin’s characters are inspired by these notions and measured by them ... Karamzin’s view of history was built not upon historical regularity, but with moral and psychological aesthetics. He was interested in the human being with personal qualities
and accidents, rather than in society with its structure and disposition; he observed in the past ... manifestations of moral strength and beauty in individual images or mass movements.\textsuperscript{21}

Early critics identified impassivity with impartiality, with objectivity in the estimation of historical deeds and persons.\textsuperscript{22} “In the thirties and forties ... this special position of an author came to be considered as a drawback, as evidence of the writer-aristocrat’s arrogant indifference to the internal world of human being. ... they began to blame Walter Scott for being insensible, unwilling and unable to penetrate through the external shell of events.”\textsuperscript{23} A. Herzen (1812–1870), an emotional and quite superficial writer (though very influential for Russian social thought) writes:

there is another disadvantage with Walter Scott: he is an aristocrat, and a common shortcoming of aristocratic tales is a certain apathy. He sometimes sounds like a secretary of a criminal court who, with the most unruffled calm, reports about the most ruffled incidents; everywhere in his novel you see a lord-Tory with an aristocratic smile grandly recounting. His business is to portray; and just like he, describing nature, does not get deep into plant physiology and geological studies, he treats a human being: his psychology is weak, and all his attention is concentrated upon ... the surface of the soul.\textsuperscript{24}

Another influential critic V. Belinsky (1811–1848) talks in terms Scott’s ‘cold impersonality’.\textsuperscript{25} Those who have studied the history of Scott’s novels in Russia remark that quite soon Scott became a ‘romantic’, ‘fairytale’ author for teenagers and family reading\textsuperscript{26}. The noble elite and its imitators pushed the well-established patterns and interpretations ‘down’ into the younger generation to bring it up, at the same time failing to mention that the nobility moved even closer to its extinction.

During the Soviet period many editions of Scott’s novels were issued, including multi-volume collections. They could be found in almost every family of the intelligentsia, for example, in the house of academician Sergei Korolev, the famous chief designer of Soviet spaceships. The most

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[22] Dolinin 1988, 185.
\item[23] Dolinin 1988, 183.
\item[26] It can be inferred from the Addendum. See also Dolinin 1988, 150.
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popular and favourite Russian comic actor and clown at the end of the twentieth century Yury
Nikulin went in his youth to the Soviet-Finnish war taking some books with him, among them
Ivanhoe.

Dolinin (unfortunately, in passing) remarks that ‘the walter-scottian conception of the human
being had a much more deep and fruitful impact upon the development of historical thought than
upon the literature process’.\(^{27}\) Emile Haumant also declares this.\(^{28}\)

Scott’s novels were favoured reading of many eminent Russian nineteenth-century historians.
For example, S.M. Solov’ev (1820–1879), the author of Publichnye chteniya o Petre Velikom
(Public Lectures about Peter the Great) and Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen (A History of
Russia from Ancient Times), mentioned Scott’s novels in his Zapiski (Memoirs).\(^{29}\) The childish
and youthful passion for Scott’s novels was changed in university years by a reading of Hume,
Robertson and Gibbon.

Leading Russian historians could not help mentioning Scott’s well-known interpretations in
their works on history. For example, T.N. Granovsky (1813–1855) in his lectures of 1849–1850 on
the history of the Middle Ages remarked about one of his heroes: “As a matter of fact, in historical
writings and in works of art this character is represented in the wrong way, for example, in Walter
Scott’s novels.”\(^{30}\) At the same time, Granovsky, of course, was well acquainted with the British
historical school, including the “great works of Hume and Gibbon”.\(^{31}\) It is worth mentioning that
the audience of these lectures consisted of “people from high society, the cream of Moscow’s noble
public”.\(^{32}\) This public admired his account of history, “which public opinion and the university
tradition marked as ‘artistic’”.\(^{33}\)

In the nineteenth century the influence upon historians of Hegel’s philosophy of history
was considerable, but this was not at all in conflict with the romantic Scott: rather, it regulated
historians’ views and directed their attention to the struggle of contradictory principles and to
historic crises. Russian historians perfectly combined ‘Scottianism’ and ‘Hegelianism’:

external forms of every humankind’s life, of every age are just incarnations of the general thought
that forms the conditions of this life; and if not acquainted with these external occurrences, we

\(^{27}\) Dolinin 1988, 194.
\(^{28}\) Haumant 1913, 362.
\(^{29}\) Solov’ev 1983, 231.
\(^{30}\) Granovsky 1986, 21.
\(^{31}\) Granovsky 1986, 234.
\(^{32}\) Dmitriev 1986, 324.
\(^{33}\) Dmitriev 1986, 327.
could never be able to conceive their creative prototype. Walter Scott, undoubtedly the greatest historical genius of the new times, understood completely this truth. ... in his novels there is more true History than in the historical works of the majority of the writers-philosophers who depicted the same epoch.\textsuperscript{34}

Thus one of the reputed Russian professors of history of the 1830s M.I. Lunin reads Scott as a ‘Hegelianist’, for whom the writer’s method is important as a way to describe ‘exteriors’. Lunin interprets Scott’s objectivity precisely in this sense, ‘putting under’ it the ‘prototype’ which, of course, cannot be found in Scott’s novels.

The understanding and narration of history after Karamzin’s works, the ‘triumphant passing’ of Scott through the educated classes of Russia,\textsuperscript{35} and Pushkin’s prose should be sorted with literature and literature’s narrative.

Scott became for Russia one of those authors – of whom A. Pushkin was the undisputed leader, who actively borrowed Scott’s aesthetic devices – who summed up the quest of the Enlightenment and brought into the world a special type of artistic historical discourse. As V. Klyuchevsky wrote:

Pushkin was a historian where he did not mean to be one and where a real historian often failed to be one. \textit{The Captain’s Daughter} was written in between times, while working with \textit{Pugacheshchina}, but it has more history than \textit{A History of the Pugachev Riot}, which looks like a long explicatory comment on the novel. ... Thus we find in Pushkin’s works a quite coherent chronicle of our society in individuals for more than 100 years ... Pushkin is not an author of memoirs and not a historian, but for the historian it is a real godsend when he finds an artist between himself and a memoir writer.\textsuperscript{36}

Moreover, from Klyuchevsky’s point of view, the poet, in turn, personified a historical summit: “Pushkin’s poetry was prepared by the consecutive efforts of two epochs, those of Peter I and Catherine II. The entire century of our history worked to make Russian life capable of manifesting the Russian artistic genius in such a way.”\textsuperscript{37} Klyuchevsky even searches for ancestors of such a well-known character as Eugene Onegin: “Of course, such a person can only have historical and

\textsuperscript{34} Lunin 1836, 14–16.
\textsuperscript{35} For an excellent and detailed description of the process, see Altshuller 1996.
\textsuperscript{36} Klyuchevsky 1990, 394, 399.
\textsuperscript{37} Klyuchevsky 1990, 403.
genetic ancestors, not genealogical ones.”
Klyuchevskii ‘inserted’ Onegin into Russian history and outlined a long line of possible ‘ancestors’ for him since the seventeenth century, that is, a line of historical types ‘congenial’ to Onegin: “His ancestors were people from the nobility, which was a leader in secular education and a body of control. They were extraordinary people who found themselves cast into a false position by excessively fast changes in education.”

The subsequent interpretation of ‘great Russian writers’ as authoritative historians rests upon the implicit idea that they portray, in their works of art, events very close to ‘what happened in reality’. That is what their ‘artistic genius’ is about from the point of view of ‘realism’. Participants in the battle of Borodino reproached Leo Tolstoy for inaccuracies in his reproduction of real events. Now that is not important for us, because we believe that Tolstoy ingeniously conveys the ‘spirit’ of that time.

The official ideology of the Soviet era also used literature and artistic imagination (together with the doctrine of realism) to support a certain conception of history. Culture and education — and thus the understanding of human problems — in the Soviet Union was at such a level that artistic discourse was easily recognized as history, and even more ‘true’ than the official version. Well-educated strata of society interpret Russian history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries according to Pushkin; of the nineteenth century according to Tolstoy, Lermontov and Dostoevsky; of the twentieth century according to A. Solzhenitsyn, V. Shalamov, A. Akhmatova, et al. The stories and plays ‘about history’ of M. Shatrov, V. Pikul and E. Radzinsky are extremely popular.

Russian historians continue to point to the enduring significance or role of the interpretation of history through fiction. This results in a domination of historical discourse by political and moral values:

Society had already at that time [at the end of the nineteenth century] chosen other heroes, produced or assimilated certain stereotypes in the interpretation of history and historic figures. People that belonged to the cultural epoch of Leo Tolstoy looked at all Russian history, and not just at history, through the eyes of the author of War and Peace ... The latest times have changed but a little.

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38 Klyuchevsky 1990, 413.
40 The influence of Scott’s techniques on Tolstoy is worth studying (Altshuler 2006, 225–231), though, as Gareth Jones remarks, in this field we still have an ‘absence of investigations’ (Gareth Jones 2004, 185).
41 Gryunberg 2001, 309.
Now after more than twenty years since the collapse of Soviet power, historic figures of the past who were eager for revolutionary, violent acts, are valued, explicitly or implicitly, as ‘positive’, ‘progressive’, ‘heroic’, and ‘highly moral’ in history.

Scott’s main achievement (his representation of the ordinary man set amidst the background of large-scale historical events) had no influence upon Russian historiography, which continued (and continues now) to describe only events in terms of their ‘state scale’. However, that achievement survived in literature for three centuries, developing both a philosophy of history and a philosophical anthropology.

In this way a special view of history has been established in Russia. History is often considered here as a reality that is best conceived and conveyed by the narrative of artistic fiction, a view held by both officials and dissidents, and one which made Russian historiography particularly open to the influence of Sir Walter Scott. ‘Writers of history’ did not just create their histories, they formed the public history, and not for all the people of Russia, but mainly for the noble elite. They searched for cultural clichés, patterns, and metaphors to mold their historical images, schemes, and explanations. Even before Scott, Russian intellectuals searched for ways to find convincing and ‘useful’ accounts of history, so Scott, ‘a bard of nobles’, arrived at just the right time. The whole of Russian history seemed consisted of novels that at first could be compared and then surpassed Walter Scott’s magnificent imagination. To compare the present with the past, to find historical examples and analogies became the norm for intellectual and ruling elites.

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Addendum

A list of Russian translations of W. Scott’s literary works published in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century

1821

Беглец. Сочинение баронета Вальтера Скотта. Перевод с французского. В трех частях. Москва: В Университетской типографии, 1821. [Fugitive]

1823

Деянія древняго рыцарства, представленья втроагательных повествованиях, заимствованных из истории средних веков. Перевод с немецкаго. С 5 картинами. М.: В типографии Августа Семена, 1823. [The Ancient Knights’ Deeds]

Кенильворт. Историч. роман сира Вальтера Скотта. С присовокуплением предуведомительного замечания о Кенильвортском замке и жизнеописания графа Лейчестера. Пер. с франц. Т. 1–4. М.: Тип. А. Семена, 1823. [Kenilworth].

Матильда Рокби. Поэма в 6-ти книгах. Соч. Валтера Скотта. Перевод с французского. С 5 картинаами. М.: В типографии Августа Семена, 1823. [Rokeby].

1824

Густав Вальдгейм или Преступник по неволе, Истинное происшествие, взятое из записок одного молодого гусара. Соч. Валтера Скотта. Перевел с французского А. П...в. М.: В типографии А. Похорского, 1824. [Gustav Waldheim]

Выслужившийся офицер, или Война Монтроза. Историч. роман. Соч. Валтера Скотта, авт. Шотландских пуритан, Роб Роя, Эдинбургской темницы и проч. Пер. с франц. Ч. 1–4. М.: Тип. П. Кузнецова, 1824. [The Legend of Montrose].

1825

Аббат или Некоторые черты жизни Марии Стюарт, королевы шотландской. Соч. сира Валтера Скотта; в 4-х частях. Пер. с ангиского. Ч. 1–4. СПб.: Тип. Имп. театра, 1825. [The Abbot].

Невеста Трирмена или Долина святаго Иоанна. Поэма в 3-х песнях Валтера Скотта. Пер. [прозой] с франц. П. К. М.: Тип. Имп. Моск. театра, 1825. [The Bridal of Triermain].

Эдинбургская темница, из собрания новых сказок моего хозяина, изданных Джедедием Клейшботам, пономарем и учителем Гандер-Клюфсаго прихода. Соч. Сира Валтера Скотта. Пер. с франц. А...а З... Ч. 1–4. М.: Тип С. Селивановского, 1825. [The Heart of Midlothian].


1826

Ивангое, или Возвращение из Крестовых походов. [Роман]. Соч. Валтера Скотта. Ч. 1-4. СПб.: Тип. А. Смирдина, 1826. [Ivanhoe].
1827


Кентен Дюрвард, или Шотландец при дворе Людовика XI. Ист. роман сира Вальтера Скотта. Пер. А.И. Писарева. Ч. 1-4. М.: Тип. Имп. Моск. театра, 1826–1827. [Quentin Durward].

Невеста Ламмермура, Новые сказки моего хозяина, собр. и изд. Джедедием Клейшботамом, учителем и ключарем Гандерклейг. прихода. Соч. сира Валтера Скотта. Ч. 1–3. М.: Тип. Имп. Моск. театра, 1827. [Bride of Lammermoor].

Письма о Франции в 1815 году, сира Валтера Скотта, под именем Павла. С фр. пер. М.П...в. Т. 1–2. М.: Тип. Решетникова, 1827. [Letters about France in 1815].

Письма Павла к своему семейству. Соч. сир-Валтера Скотта; Пер. с фр. Г... П...в. Ч. 1–3. М.: Тип. Имп. Моск. театра, 1827. [Paul's Letters to His Family].

Талисман, или Ришард в Палестине: Из истории времен Крестовых походов / [Соч.] Валтера-Скотта. Ч. 1–3. М.: Тип. С. Селивановского, 1827. [The Talisman].

1828


Елена Дуглас, или Дева озера Лок-Катринского. Пер. с фр. Ч. 1–2. Соч. Валтера Скотта. М.: Унив. тип., 1828. [The Lady of the Lake].


Галидон-Гилль. Драм. картина из шотланд. истории. Соч. Валтера Скотта. С фр. Д. ... Е. ... М.: Тип. Решетникова, 1828. [Halidon Hill].


1829


Предания о Монтрозе и его спутниках. Пятая повесть моего хозяина. С англ. Ч. 1–2. Соч. Валтера Скотта. М.: Тип. Н. Степанова при Имп. театре, 1829. [The Legend of Montrose].


Вудсток, или Всадник. История Кромвелевых времен. 1651 г. Соч. сира Вальтер Скотта. Пер. с фр. С. де Шаплет. Ч. 1-4. СПб.: Тип. Деп. нар. прос., 1829. [Woodstock].

1830

Певериль. Ист. роман сира Валтера Скотта. Пер. с фр. Ч. 1-5. М.: Тип. Н. Стенанова, при Имп. театре, 1830. [Peveril of the Peak].

Карл Смелый, или Анна Гейерштейнская, Дева мрака. Соч. сира Вальтер Скотта. Пер. с англ. С. де Шаплет. Ч. 1-5. СПб.: Тип. Штаба Отд. корпуса внутр. стражи, 1830. [Anne of Geierstein].

Канонгетские летописи. Пер. с фр. Соч. сира Валтера Скотта. Пер. с франц. М.: Вольная тип. Пономарева, 1830. [Chronicles of the Canongate].


1831


1833

Опасный замок. Последнее соч. сира Вальтер-Скотта. Пер. с англ. С. де Шаплет. Ч. 1-2. СПб., 1833. [Castle Dangerous].


1836

Жизнь Наполеона Бонапарте, императора французов. Соч. сира Вальтер-Скотта. Пер. с англ. С. де Шаплет. Т. 1-4. СПб.: Изданием И.И. Глазунова и К°, 1836-1837. [The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte].

1845

Квентин Дорвард. [Роман]. С послед. прим. и прибавл. авт. Пер. с англ. Под ред. А.А. Краевского. СПб.: М.Д. Ольхин и К.И. Жернаков, 1845. [Quentin Durward].

Антикварий. С послед. примеч. и приб. авт. Пер. с англ., под ред. А.А. Краевского. СПб.: М.Д. Ольхин и К.И. Жернаков, 1845. [The Antiquary].

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1846

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Гей-Меннринг, или Астролог. С послед. примеч. и приб. авт. Пер. с англ., под ред. А.А. Краевского. СПб.: М.Д. Ольхин и К.И. Жернаков, 1846. [Guy Mannering].

1847

1848
Вудсток. Роман Вальтер-Скотта. Ч. 1-я и 2-я. СПб.: Тип. К. Крайя, 1848. [Woodstock].

1851
Легенда о Монтроэ. Историч. роман Вальтера Скотта. Пер. с англ. Ч. 1-2. М.: Тип. В. Кирилова, 1851. [A Legend of Montrose].

1854
Генрих. Повесть, взятая из соч. знаменитого Вальтер Скотта. М., 1854. [Heinrich].

1856
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1857

1865
Квентин Дорвард. Соч. Вальтер Скотта. М.: А.И. Мамонтов, 1865. [Quentin Durward].

1866
Ивангоэ. Роман Вальтер Скотта. Обраб. для юношества А. Каковцевым. СПб.-М.: М.О. Вольф, 1866. [Ivanhoe].

1867
Квентин Дурвард. Роман Вальтер Скотта. Обраб. для юношества. СПб.-М.: М.О. Вольф, 1867. [Quentin Durward].
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